

MARY ELLEN BIRKETT

The French Perspective on the Laplace Affair

THE PAGES THAT FOLLOW present for the first time English translations of several French texts concerning the visit of Captain Cyrille-Pierre-Théodore Laplace and his fifty-two-gun frigate *L'Artémise* to Hawai'i in July 1839.¹ Laplace was the first Frenchman to visit the Islands with specific instructions from Paris to enter into official diplomatic relations with the Hawaiian government. The French minister of the navy, Ducampe de Rosamel, sent Laplace to Honolulu to make it unmistakably clear to the Hawaiian king and chiefs that if they wanted to maintain good relations with major international powers such as France, they must not take lightly promises made in treaties with those powers.

Laplace believed that the treaty he presented to the Hawaiian king on July 12, 1839,² secured freedom of worship for all inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands, thereby ending what the French government considered persecution of Roman Catholics in the archipelago. In addition, Captain Laplace persuaded King Kamehameha III to sign a convention on July 17, 1839, protecting the personal and commercial interests of Frenchmen in the Islands.³ This trade agreement also effectively repealed the ban on the sale of distilled liquors that the American Protestant clergy in Hawai'i had worked so hard to obtain.

Not surprisingly, the American Protestant missionaries and their

Mary Ellen Birkett is professor of French language and literature at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts. She has been an annual contributor to The Romantic Movement: A Selective and Critical Bibliography since 1979 and has published articles on the literary works of Rousseau, Lamartine, and Stendhal.

The Hawaiian Journal of History, vol. 32 (1998)

supporters in the United States were quick to protest. James Hunnewell, for one, railed:

The visit of the French Frigate L'Artemise, Captain Laplace, and the unparalleled outrage committed by that commander in the name of his government on the unoffending Sandwich islanders and on the American Missionaries is such a gross outrage on them, as must be looked upon with the greatest horror and detestation by every friend to the government and people of those islands.⁴

Much more American ink was spilled, all of the same color, though ranging in intensity from Levi Chamberlain's understated assessment of the French frigate—"her communications with [the] government have not been very pleasing"⁵—to R. C. Wyllie's exasperated charge that Laplace's actions in Hawai'i were "a piece of naval assumption and claptrap on his part."⁶



FIG. 1. Laplace's ship, *L'Artemise*, as depicted in an engraving in his narrative of the voyage, *Campagne de circumnavigation de la frégate L'Artemise, pendant les années 1837, 1838, 1839, et 1840*, published in six volumes between 1841 and 1854.

This picture of French gunboat diplomacy, which has been widely publicized in English-language accounts, is of course one-sided. The French side of the story, on the other hand, is less well-known. Although some English-language works do take the French version of events into account, the scope and focus of those studies do not permit in-depth treatment of the French perspective of the "Laplace affair."⁷

This study cannot be exhaustive either. What Laplace and his compatriots wrote about Hawai'i exceeds the space available here. Moreover, because there are errors, misconceptions, and gaps in Laplace's text that reflect a very French view of Hawaiian culture, historians, sociologists, and political scientists will find rich terrain for further exploration. My aim is simply to present as full a translation as possible of Laplace's version of the story⁸ and the French context in which it took place, so that scholars will be able to study the "Laplace affair" from a point of view other than the anglocentric one that has come to dominate.

FRENCH RELATIONS WITH HAWAI'I PRIOR TO LAPLACE'S ARRIVAL

La Pérouse's ship *L'Astrolabe* brought the French flag to Hawaiian waters for the first time on May 30–31, 1786. This brief appearance, however, had no sequel for nearly twenty years, for France, involved in the Revolution and Napoleonic wars, faced strife on other fronts. But with the return of more peaceful times under the Restored Monarchy in 1815, industry and mercantilism grew steadily. Prosperity in turn led to a revival of scientific and commercial interest in the Pacific. Between 1819 and 1830, a major scientific voyage—that of Captain Louis de Freycinet on the royal navy's ship *L'Uranie*—and a good half-dozen private French trading vessels stopped in Hawaiian ports.⁹ To protect French trade in the Far East and the Pacific, the July Monarchy of Louis-Philippe sponsored the voyages of Captain Vaillant, who visited Hawai'i in September 1836 on *La Bonite*; Captain Dupetit-Thouars, who arrived there in July 1837 on *La Vénus*; and Laplace on *L'Artémise*.

There were those at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who believed

that French national interests in the Pacific, so well served by commerce and naval expeditions, could also be served by the Catholic religion. The French government naturally preferred to keep this belief from becoming public policy; nonetheless, it was made explicit within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by a "Memorandum on French Catholic Missions:"

The missions to Polynesia have a special right to the protection and the encouragement of the government of the king, for they are in their early stages, and their apostolic success, their authority over the peoples to whom they bring civilization, the knowledge they strive to propagate among them of our language, our customs and our arts, can, in the end, create new avenues for our commerce, new markets for our industry, elements of French colonization and new sources of French influence.¹⁰

The beginnings of the Catholic mission in Hawai'i had indeed been difficult, largely because of the presence of English-speaking Protestant missionaries who had arrived in the Islands as early as 1820, under the auspices of the Boston-based American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). Six years passed before Pope Leo XII charged the Picpus Fathers (officially, the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and the Perpetual Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament) with evangelization of the Hawaiian Islands. In 1827, the French missionary party arrived in the Islands. It consisted of three priests—Father Alexis Bachelot, Father Abraham Armand, and Father Patrick Short—plus three laymen—Brothers Theodore Boissier, Melchior Bondu, and Leonore Portal. By 1830, certain Hawaiian chiefs had taken steps to curtail the Catholic religion, including the extreme step of harassing Catholic natives. The following year, the Queen Regent Ka'ahumanu (a convert of the American Protestants) ordered the priests to leave; they pleaded that no ships were available. But in December 1831, all but Brother Melchior were formally sent away from the Islands, over the objections of the British consul, Richard Charlton, and the American consul, John C. Jones. The priests, although profoundly upset, did not choose to inform their home government of their expulsion.

When Captain Vaillant stopped in Hawai'i in 1836, he learned

that the French missionaries had been banished from the Islands and promptly informed the minister of the navy in Paris of the affront to the dignity of France and its religion presented by this expulsion of its citizens.¹¹ The French government, however, did not decide to become involved at this point. And so it was that when Captain Dupetit-Thouars brought his frigate *La Vénus* to Hawai'i in 1837, he came with no instructions from Paris regarding these Frenchmen.

But involvement awaited Dupetit-Thouars: no sooner had he anchored *La Vénus* outside Honolulu harbor than he received an urgent letter from Father Bachelot, who with Father Short had attempted to return to Hawai'i from exile on the California (then Mexican) coast. Both priests had been prevented from landing and had been imprisoned on board the vessel that had returned them to the Islands. Father Bachelot requested the captain's "authority or mediation"¹² to put an end to their banishment. Dupetit-Thouars protected these French citizens as far as he thought appropriate, given that he was acting on his own authority. He persuaded King Kamehameha III to sign a treaty granting French citizens the right to "go and come freely in all the states which compose the Government of the Sandwich Islands" with "the same advantages as the subjects of the most favored nation."¹³ Dupetit-Thouars did not, however, coerce the government to readmit Fathers Bachelot and Short to residence or sojourn on shore in the Sandwich Islands.¹⁴

Dupetit-Thouars's report to the minister of the navy about these events arrived in Paris in February 1838. The Ministry of the Navy forwarded it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for discussion. An unsigned "Note on the French Missions of Oceania and our interests in that part of the world" indicates that in the eyes of at least some Foreign Ministry officials Dupetit-Thouars had not gone far enough:

It would have been desirable for Mr. Dupetit-Thouars to take advantage of the situation and secure the future admission of French missionaries to the Sandwich Islands and the granting of permission for them to teach their religion as do the American missionaries. But in the face of the strong opposition presented by the government of that country, the Captain of *La Vénus*, who had not been given orders, did not believe he was authorized to demand *what, in all likelihood, would have been obtainable only through the use of force.*¹⁵

Once force had thus become associated with securing the rights of Catholics in the Sandwich Islands, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Paris convinced itself that the use of violence to achieve this goal was legitimate, and even necessary.¹⁶

Unaware of the existence of this line of thinking in Paris, less than five months after signing Dupetit-Thouars's treaty, King Kamehameha III and Kina'u issued "An Ordinance Rejecting the Catholic Religion,"¹⁷ intensified persecutions of Catholics, and, worse yet, subjected some of them to torture.¹⁸ By this time the French minister of the navy had learned that another French priest newly arrived in Hawai'i, Father Maigret, had been harshly treated.¹⁹ These affronts were unbearable to France, and she was now prepared to demand, even at cannon's mouth, acceptance of French missionaries, tolerance for those who espoused the Catholic faith, and "justice for the wrongs and insults that have been offered by this people to the subjects and Flag of France."²⁰

LAPLACE'S MISSION

To this end, on July 21, 1838, the French minister of the navy dispatched orders to Captain Laplace, who at the time was already en route to the Pacific on a voyage of circumnavigation. Laplace received these orders, along with supporting documents, at Port Jackson, Australia, in March 1839. The plight of French Catholics in Hawai'i being distressingly similar to that of French Catholics in Tahiti, these orders read:

Monsieur le commandant, my dispatch of June 10, 1837, has made you aware of the harassments that several Frenchmen have suffered at the hands of the Queen of Tahiti, inspired by the English Methodist missionaries who have unlimited influence over these islands. . . .

What the English Methodists are doing in Tahiti, American Calvinist missionaries are doing in the Sandwich Islands.

They have incited the king of these islands, or rather those who govern in his name, to actions that apply to all foreigners of the Catholic faith—all designated, intentionally, as "Frenchmen."

The first victims have been Mr. Bachelot, a French missionary, and Mr. Short, an English Catholic missionary. These two priests had been

admitted entry; they had exercised their ministry at Honolulu for several years; their conduct was irreproachable, but their successful evangelism gave umbrage to the American missionaries. They found themselves prohibited from practicing their religion, then ignominiously banished from the Island, deported to the California desert, then recalled only to be imprisoned on the ship that had brought them back.

It is in this situation that Captain Dupetit-Thouars found them when he arrived in the Sandwich Islands on the frigate *La Vénus* in July of 1837.

[E]ven though Captain Dupetit-Thouars intervened in favor of the persecuted [Catholic] missionaries in the Sandwich Islands, it seems that—out of uncertainty as to the appropriate attitude to adopt toward a semi-savage government that had but limited capacity to realize that it was guilty of a grave offense—he did not make the demonstration of authority that must doubtless be made in order to leave an indelible impression.

It is true that Mr. Bachelot was freed at his order, as Mr. Short was released at the demand of the commander of the English ship the *Sulphur*, but on the condition that they leave the Island at the first opportunity. Captain Dupetit-Thouars also obtained a convention containing the pledge of the king of the Sandwich Islands to treat French nationals as foreigners with most favored nation status. Finally, before he left, Captain Dupetit-Thouars let it be widely known that in the absence of an official consul he charged Mr. Dudoit, a Creole from Ile de France living in Honolulu, with the mission of protecting French citizens residing in or arriving at the Sandwich Islands.

Experience has proven the inadequacy of these measures. Mr. Dudoit has informed me in his letter of 21 November²¹ that Mr. Maigret, a French priest who came to Honolulu to await an opportunity to proceed from there to the Marquesas, has been contemptuously repulsed; that a simple carpenter [Antoine Vincent] has been treated similarly in Tahiti and that the convention drawn up by Captain Dupetit-Thouars has in no way changed either the attitude of the local government or the conduct of those who are its advisors.

In communicating to me the letters he has received from the British consul in the Sandwich Islands and the American consul in Tahiti,²² Mr. Henry de Villeneuve [commander of the French Naval Station of the South Seas] observes that under the pretext of a religious quarrel, the Calvinist American missionaries at Honolulu and the English Methodists at Tahiti seem indeed to be acting as if their real aim is to estab-

lish at those places in the Pacific the exclusive influence of their own countries and to monopolize—to their own advantage—the trade that may be carried on there. This appears true principally in the Sandwich Islands where all foreigners who offend the American Protestant ministers are harassed and called “French.”²³

Whether this is the case or not, it is of great importance to keep machinations such as these from having negative consequences for our navigators and to guarantee that all French citizens who may go to these islands receive adequate protection. This is to be your principal mission; you will stop therefore not only in Tahiti when you cross the Pacific on your way to the west coast of America but also in the Sandwich Islands in the fulfillment of this mission.

In both places you will be able to gain more precise information about the deeds that have been reported to me; you will evaluate the importance they have in and of themselves and as part of a larger political scheme. You will strive to abolish the ill-will that reigns toward the French, to rectify the erroneous opinion that pertains as to France’s power, and to make it well understood that it is in the best interests of the chiefs of Oceania to act so as not to incur her wrath. You will exact, if necessary with all the force that you command, complete reparation for the wrongs that they have committed and you will not leave those shores until you have left an indelible impression.²⁴

En route from Port Jackson to Tahiti, with Papeete in view, *L’Artémise* ran aground on a coral reef, sustained severe damage, and had to be towed into harbor. Laplace’s orders had authorized him to use force; but with *L’Artémise* out of commission, no show of force was possible, nor—as Laplace reported to the minister of the navy—necessary:

The major construction that we have had to have done has not made me lose sight of Your Excellency’s orders, and I have made known to the queen and to the assembly of chiefs the dissatisfaction with which the king of France regards the persecution that Catholics suffered in the wake of the prohibition of their religion in Tahiti and His Majesty’s firm resolution that the law recently promulgated against them be annulled. Thanks to gifts and diplomacy, the support of the principal chiefs has been mine for quite some time; in addition, large numbers of natives have lived closely with my sailors for two months, further tip-

ping the scales in my favor, so that when the English missionaries tried to use threats and plots to oppose the treaty I presented, they were completely defeated.²⁵

Laplace hoped to fulfill his minister's orders as peacefully at his next port of call:

I believe I will be able to bring my negotiations in the Sandwich Islands to a conclusion as successfully as I have in Tahiti, notwithstanding the rather adverse conditions of my visit there; should this not be the case, I will not hesitate to employ violence to obtain an exemplary reparation for the insults to France made by the chief of this archipelago, or by those who advise him, and secure guarantees of better future conduct. It is probable, however, if the most recent news from Honolulu is to be believed, that I will not be forced to such extreme measures. . . .²⁶

A few hours after his arrival in Honolulu harbor, Laplace sent an ultimatum (which he called a "Manifesto") to the principal Hawaiian chiefs that reflected this opinion:

His Majesty the King of the French having commanded me to come to Honolulu in order to put an end either by force or by persuasion to the ill-treatment of which the French are the victims at the Sandwich Islands, I hasten first to employ the latter means as being more in harmony with the noble and liberal political system pursued by France towards weaker nations. . . .²⁷

"Persuasion," in this context, had already been defined by Dupetit-Thouars in Tahiti a few months prior to Laplace's prolonged stay there: first, an informational visit to the consul; then, written notification to the reigning monarch that hostilities would commence in twenty-four hours time if reparations were not made to France for the persecution of its missionaries; next, a written offer of protection sent to the British and American consuls; following this, a blockade of the port and a demand for a monetary indemnity; finally, a twenty-one-gun salute to the French flag to mark the peaceful conclusion of a treaty between the native monarch and the French commanding officer.²⁸

LAPLACE'S CREDENTIALS

By the time Laplace applied his own "persuasive strategy" in Hawai'i, he had for many years held the trust of the minister of the navy. His service dossier, maintained by the Personnel Department of the French Navy,²⁹ if one-dimensional, shows Laplace's naval career to have been worthy of such confidence.

A reader of his dossier can trace Laplace's development as a naval officer: his knowledge of warfare, ships, and the seas of the world, as well as his increasing responsibilities for material, men, and missions of diplomatic scope. Such a reader would have to look closely, and read between the lines, to see Laplace as man endowed with education as well as practical knowledge; as a conservative, resourceful leader; as a clever yet touchy tactician; and as a sincere believer in his religion, his country, and his profession.

Laplace was born on November 7, 1793, in rather unusual circumstances: on board the Boston-registered ship *Rebecca*, off the coast of Santo Domingo. His service dossier sheds no light on why his mother was at sea, but clearly the sea was in his blood, for he entered the French Navy as novice midshipman in 1809. Even before rising to midshipman second class, he had been in a successful sea battle against the English in the Indian Ocean. After the fall of Napoleon's empire, Laplace served in France, Newfoundland, and the Antilles. His determination and know-how won him regular promotions: midshipman first class in December 1810, ensign in May 1812, lieutenant in June 1819. Each recommendation for promotion was accompanied by recognition that Laplace was conscientious, observant, and of good character—to one superior this meant that the young naval officer never gambled or frequented cafés, to another it meant that he always acted with honor and sensitivity, thereby earning the particular esteem of his commanding officer, the friendship of his comrades, and the respect of his subordinates. Lieutenant Laplace received two honors in 1825: the Legion of Honor and the Cross of Saint Louis. Before receiving on bended knee the accolade of the Royal Order of Saint Louis, Laplace pledged to make it his lifelong duty to uphold the Catholic religion and to obey his king.

While rising through the ranks, Laplace was placed in command of a wide variety of vessels, from dispatch boats to store ships to

sloops of war. He also sailed in waters off the coasts of Holland, France, Algeria, Tunisia, and Senegal. In 1828 he was promoted to commander and on April 19 of the following year was given command of the brand new twenty-four-gun sloop of war *La Favorite*. This was the high point of his career to date; the thrill that Laplace must have felt at being entrusted with so "brilliant and advantageous" a command infuses from beginning to end a letter of thanks he wrote to the minister of the navy the very next day.³⁰ Shortly thereafter, Laplace and *La Favorite* embarked upon a major scientific and commercial mission of circumnavigation (1829–1832). The information brought back was of sufficient importance to earn Laplace praise from the Academy of Science, official thanks from the minister of the navy, and the privilege of publication at government expense.³¹

Promotion to captain came in January 1834, followed in September 1835 by command of the fifty-two-gun frigate *L'Artémise*, which Laplace took to the Antilles and then to New York in the summer of 1836 on a political mission. The French general consul in New York congratulated the minister of the navy and the minister of foreign affairs on their choice of Captain Laplace for this kind of diplomacy, for "Mr. Laplace is direct and open without failing to maintain the kind of dignity that commands respect."³²

It was in this capacity as naval officer–diplomat that Laplace set out from Toulon on January 20, 1837, on his second voyage of circumnavigation. The main purpose of this three-year voyage of *L'Artémise* was to show the French flag, to protect French traders whenever any of them were in need of assistance, and to obtain information of value to merchants.³³ From France Laplace went to Tenerife then south to Cape Town and on to the Indian Ocean, where he complemented his previous voyage by visiting the Red Sea, Mascate, Pondicherry, Ceylon, Singapore, Batavia, Southeast Asia, the coast of China, Australia, and Tasmania before arriving in Tahiti and the Hawaiian Islands, where the events related in the translation below took place.

THE TRANSLATOR'S TASK

Among Laplace's duties as naval officer–diplomat was the regular writing of reports to the minister of the navy. These served as the basis for his later published narratives. But writing was slow, and other

responsibilities intervened, with the result that nearly fifteen years elapsed between Laplace's visit to O'ahu and the publication of the fifth volume of his *Campagne de circumnavigation de la frigate L'Artémise*, where that visit is related. Laplace must have found that even with the aid of copious notes, the most revealing detail tended to elude his pen: his pages on the Hawaiian Islands contain many inaccuracies—some blatant, some subtle. As if to prod his memory, Laplace also tended to state the same thing, in slightly different words, several times. Moreover, the general public for whom he was now writing had broader literary tastes than those of the French naval establishment; Laplace believed that he should "instruct while interesting" this wider audience,³⁴ and to this end he proffered much information evidently gleaned at second hand. I have left out most of these repetitive, derivative passages in my translation; ellipses (. . .) in the text indicate where these omissions occur. I have also corrected obviously erroneous dates in the course of my editing but have left other inaccuracies and details of fact (such the identities of all those unnamed individuals whom Laplace met in Hawai'i) for scholars of Hawaiian history to reckon with.

Purists will find that I have not translated literally and that I have made no attempt to mold my translation into the prose style of the early nineteenth century. Laplace wrote sentences that swell to paragraphs, as Gallic syntax allows. If I were to transpose his elaborate sentence structure directly into English, the result would be convoluted at best and incoherent at worst. Consequently, I have chosen to convey the meaning of the original French by using vocabulary and patterns of speech that make Laplace more accessible to the reader of late twentieth-century American English.³⁵

The following, then, is what Laplace published in the early 1850s about Hawai'i in 1839, condensed and passed through the filter of a foreign language, yet aimed at giving him fuller say than he has so far enjoyed outside his own native French.

LAPLACE'S NARRATIVE

On the morning of July 9 *L'Artémise* came into the roadstead at Honolulu, capital of the island of Wahoo and seat of the Sandwich Islands government. The frigate moored beyond the reef. As soon as she

dropped anchor, in spite of her distance from the shore, the French consular agent [Jules Dudoit] came out to fill me in on recent events and to tell me what I might need to know in order to decide on a course of action. Monsieur Dudoit—whom Captain Dupetit-Thouars had named to this consular post because he had rendered many services to our compatriots—informed me that no sooner had our rivals and their families learned of our arrival in Honolulu than they had beaten a hasty retreat to the other side of the island. Their flight left the principal native authorities without advice or protection, completely at my mercy, and discredited in the eyes of France. Perhaps they hoped that by bending before the storm, as was their wont, they could quietly resume business as usual after the departure of *L'Artémise*. This policy appeared to be that of the native chiefs as well, for not only did they promptly restore liberty to all the Catholics whom they had forced to labor on public works projects, they immediately made arrangements for me to obtain all fresh provisions needed.

I refused, however, to accept any provisions until the grievances my country had against the Sandwich Islands government had been satisfied. This made it clear to the native authorities that they could no longer show bad faith and expect France to turn the other cheek.

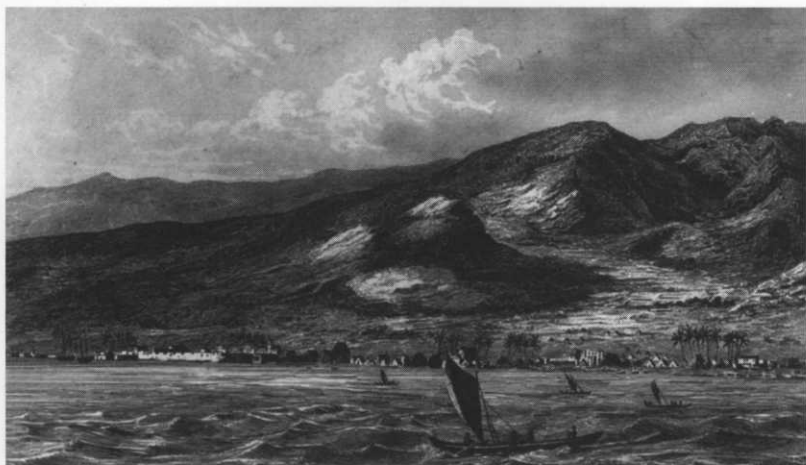


FIG. 2. Honolulu as it appeared at the time of Laplace's visit. Engraving from Laplace's narrative, *Campagne de circumnavigation de la frégate L'Artémise*.

They were now going to be called into strict account for their barbarous treatment of our priests and their converts.

Indeed, the very evening of our arrival I had a "Manifesto" delivered to the prime minister and to the governor of Wahoo, because the king was absent on one of the other islands. In it, I enumerated the complaints held by France against the king and chiefs of the Islands and pointed out that their disregard of recent treaties violated both international law and human rights. As reparation, I demanded that Catholic Christians be granted the freedom of conscience and the privileges enjoyed by the members of other religions. I exacted the sum of 20,000 piastres or Spanish gold dollars (100,000 francs), to be deposited into my hands by the governor of Wahoo, as a guarantee of the faithful execution of the new treaty we were making. During this transfer of funds, the batteries of Honolulu would fire a twenty-one-gun salute in honor of *L'Artémise's* French flag; we would then return tribute to the flag of the king of the Sandwich Islands raised above the city's two forts.³⁶

Accompanying the "Manifesto" was the treaty, which I required to be ratified within two days; failing this acceptance, hostilities would begin without delay.

Night had not yet fallen when the consul came to see me on behalf of the principal authorities of the Islands, who had decided in council to ask me to postpone the outbreak of war so that they might have time to apprise the king of the situation. I granted a stay of five days; furthermore, I allowed an override of the strict blockade of the port to enable a schooner to exit and to bring the young prince back to Wahoo. These concessions were conditional upon the holding of a hostage on board *L'Artémise*, a hostage who would be answerable for both the return of the schooner and the governor's word that no new defense preparations would be undertaken in the interval preceding proclamation of an armistice. Within minutes, a young chief presented himself. The king's secretary and one of his favorites [Haalilio]³⁷ was a handsome young man of frank, pleasant countenance and good manners; he wore European dress and spoke English quite well. He took but little time to express delight at being on board ship; in return, everyone in his new quarters welcomed him warmly. Unfortunately, these friendly relations seem to have shortened his stay with

us: he was replaced by one of his colleagues the very next day. This new hostage [John Ii]³⁸ was clearly a puppet of the missionaries. He spoke not a single European language; moreover, he was deceitful, puritanical, and critical of everything he observed around him, unlike his predecessor, who had seemed warm-hearted, extroverted, and capable of taking our part when mediating between his sovereign and ourselves (as I later learned he in fact did).

The first day of our stay in port, then, had been well spent; everything I learned led me increasingly to believe that I would bring my negotiations with the king of the Sandwich Islands to completion as peacefully as I had done with Queen Pomaré.

Very early the following morning, I received a message from a group of foreign residents offering me their support should I be obliged to use force to obtain the fair reparations I was seeking. They also asked me to supply arms to those among them who had none. I readily accepted their moral support; but I did not give them weapons, not so much because of an emotional resistance that I am sure my readers will understand, as because I had on board only enough to equip my landing companies and the men remaining on board to guard the ship during a land attack.³⁹ Fortunately, all these preparations for war were unnecessary, because of the fear they inspired in the native population no less than in the American missionaries; the latter, apprehensive of the consequences of armed conflict to themselves and their property, kept a very low profile throughout all these negotiations. Soon our consul brought the news that in the king's continued absence, the High Council had resolved to sign the treaty and to accede to all my demands in order to put the earliest end possible to a state of affairs that was alarming to every inhabitant of Honolulu.

That very afternoon, the governor of Wahoo presented himself on board in colonel's uniform, accompanied by several leading members of the government likewise dressed in European clothing; they arrived in a well-fitted-out ship's boat that came out to the frigate to an exchange of gun salutes from the shore batteries and *L'Artémise*. Flanked by my officers, I greeted them on the quarterdeck, while the landing companies, bearing arms, lined the deck. He delivered the treaty, signed by the proper authorities, along with a chest contain-

ing the 20,000 dollars demanded as a guarantee that it would be honored; then, having spoken a few words suitable to the occasion, I invited him and his retinue to my cabin below deck. There, I in turn signed the treaty and we exchanged the two originals; the chest, whose contents had been verified by the agreed-upon persons, was closed up in our presence and marked with the seals of our two sovereigns. Then, having partaken of some refreshment and visited the frigate, my visitors returned to shore to the sound of a thirteen-cannon salute honoring of our august visitor.

With peace thus established, the blockade of the port could be lifted. This enabled a large number of Honolulu's foreign residents to rush out to *L'Artémise* to congratulate me on the peaceful outcome of my negotiations and to thank me for the service I was rendering both themselves and the nation by breaking the bonds in which the Methodists had held them for so long.⁴⁰ Among our guests were distinguished members of the community, in particular the British consul (who in more than one instance had come to the defense of our priests and their persecuted converts), and Messrs ***, the one captain of the port, the other a merchant, both widely liked American citizens who were influential and esteemed in Honolulu. As one may well imagine, I welcomed them with no less respect than cordiality and invited them all to dinner on the following day.

That day, too, was to be devoted to official formalities and to putting the finishing diplomatic touches on my successful mission. The high chiefs had agreed to my stipulation that a divine service be celebrated according to Catholic rite and with full ceremony, in appropriate premises provided by the government, so that the native people would be well aware of what the treaty meant for them, and so that our religion should immediately be accorded its rightful place in the Sandwich Islands.

On Sunday, the 13th of July, at ten o'clock in the morning we went ashore: the officers of *L'Artémise* and myself, in full dress, followed by the ship's band, the landing companies, and the greater part of the crew, who came to attend the ceremony.

This took place in a spacious hut that had been the residence of the preceding king and which had been set up and decorated for the occasion. Mass was celebrated by an Irish Catholic priest [Father

Arsenius Robert Walsh] who, because of his nationality, had received permission from the local authorities to reside in the Sandwich Islands—on the express condition that he not take his ministry among the natives. Many people were there: most of the foreign residents, notwithstanding their being Protestant, wanted to be present as a way of expressing their strong disapproval of the barbarous behavior of the Methodist missionaries toward our fellow Catholics.

Everything took place most decorously; so thus it was—without the least complaint, the slightest protest—that a new religious era dawned, so to speak, in the Sandwich Islands. I am convinced that this era will bring the unfortunate peoples of these islands the civilization and well-being that, sad to say, they have not until now been able to know.

[During the church service], a band of native worshippers caught my eye: they had been victims of the most recent persecutions, when they had held firm to their faith in the teeth of cruel punishment. Now they were happy, their faces radiant with joy. I believe that the presence of so many of Honolulu's most respected citizens, added to the brilliant religious ceremonies unfolding on the very site where a few days earlier our priests and their converts had not dared to gather to pray, brought them pride as individuals and as Catholics—a name that had so long been a source of shame and harassment for them. These native converts felt that there was a sacred bond between themselves and us: for them the French were brothers and protectors.

Indeed, fellow-feeling for us seemed indeed to have taken hold of all the inhabitants, whatever their race, color, or religion. At the close of the ceremony, we were greeted effusively—officers, sailors, and myself—in every quarter of the city we happened to visit. Among the numerous white families I met in the course of repaying the calls of the previous evening, I encountered the same sentiment; and everywhere the French of *L'Artémise* were received as guests for whom no welcome could be too warm.

Word had it that even the king was delighted with the present turn of events. He had arrived in Honolulu earlier that morning, having come incognito on one of his schooners indistinguishable from the local coasting vessels. He let it be known that he wished to meet with me. But the Methodists had reappeared on the scene, now that their

fears had been put to rest. Doubtless it was they who reminded the king of the holiness of the Sabbath, for the French consul was directed to inform me that the royal audience would not take place until the following afternoon.

[That day, despite stormy weather] I was able to land on shore where our consul was waiting to escort the officers of *L'Artémise* and myself to the residence of the king of the Sandwich Islands. I was received in a large sparsely furnished white-washed room, at whose center was seated the king, dressed in a British colonel's uniform; his sisters solemnly occupied large arm chairs, one on either side of him. Around them stood the principal members of the native government, looking like caricatures in their bits and pieces of uniform. A Methodist clergyman served as interpreter, as was the custom at the Sandwich Islands court; as a result, our conversation was limited to mutual congratulations for the good relations that had just been established between our two countries and to the prince's assurance that he vigorously endorsed both the treaty ratified two days previously by his ministers and the trade agreement that accompanied it.

While the missionary was waxing eloquent (perhaps to the detriment of the accuracy of his translation), the august trio and I were able to indulge our curiosity by looking each other over carefully. Tamehameha the third, called Kawy-Keaouly, a tall, handsome man, appeared to me to be in his twenties, strongly hewn, with a good physique. Although his eyes were dark, his facial features were not without dignity nor character, and his manners were quite distinguished; as a matter of fact, he wore his European costume without too much embarrassment, even though it was evident that he saved it for special occasions, preferring the comfort of his native costume in the heat of the Islands.

During this audience with which the king honored me, his manner was most engaging. Nevertheless, I must admit that I was constantly distracted by the two princesses. It was not so much as an admirer of the fair sex but as an observer of the extraordinary that they arrested my attention. Never before had fate offered me a better opportunity to marvel at the works of nature.

Picture, if you will, two young women, each at least five feet six inches tall, broad-shouldered, so generously endowed as to defy the

imagination: large hazel eyes, big nose, huge mouth, copper-colored complexion (features in no way suggestive of a gentle nature)—the whole surmounted by a mass of unruly hair interwoven with red flowers in the most unusual of coiffures. Then add a high-necked dress of flowered cloth, laden with furbelows to shield from profane eyes breasts whose heavy fullness, making a corset useless, overflowed in all their enormity nearly to the knees. Finally, fill in feet, legs, and all the particular attributes of femininity that are no less sensual or provocative. [As] the history of Sandwich Islands royalty shows, these fair ladies well know how to mix pleasure with politics. As regents or prime ministers (positions which are theirs by right of birth), they exercise unlimited influence over their husbands, brothers, and children in the government; they are always plotting to seize power in some revolution or other. This is particularly true now that, as converts to Christianity, they offer a way for the Methodists to dominate the government.

As a matter of fact, the missionaries had used an ascendancy so gained to make the youngest of the two princesses who so fascinated me marry a young chief who was one of their protégés and for whom they had secured the important position of governor of Wahoo. He was the one with whom I had negotiated the treaty and who had brought it on board along with the 100,000 francs. I found him pleasant, good-looking, distinguished, lacking in neither intelligence nor energy. He was said to be ambitious and to be aiming at nothing less than to have the chiefess-premier (aided by the American missionaries) designate his eldest son successor to the king (who had no children by the woman whom his pious advisers had made him marry).

So it was that the young king of the Sandwich Islands found himself surrounded by enemies in the very heart of his family. Unfortunately, the little education he had received had not sufficed to develop in him the character required to avoid the pitfalls and surmount the obstacles put in his path by those who were jealous of his authority, namely, his closest relatives and the majority of the high chiefs. Even the foreign residents, who supported him and without whose assistance he undoubtedly would already have been dethroned, were continually at his heels with just but incessant demands. Constantly at grips, then, on the one hand with exacting friends and on

the other with enemies as powerful as they were dangerous, lacking wise and disinterested counselors, and unable to raise enough funds to increase the number of his partisans, the young prince had surrendered the reins of power to his sisters and brother-in-law. He chose instead to lead a quiet, peaceful existence at Maui, far from the dangers and difficulties of life in the capital.

In these circumstances, any change brought about by foreign influence could only be to his advantage; and if, as in the present case, such change were opposed to the interests of his enemies, it might even bring him pleasure. So even though I had temporarily depleted his treasury, he and I promptly found ourselves on the best of terms; and when, at the end of the audience, I asked him in English (which he understood and spoke quite well) to visit *L'Artémise*, my offer was accepted with eagerness, even though it did not appear to please the interpreter nor some of the important personages also present. . . .

I ended the day in town, dining with the French consul, who had kindly invited several persons of standing in the community to honor me at his home. . . . Since my arrival in the Sandwich Islands I had heard many fine things about the amiability and charm of the ladies in the families of my host and the British consul; they were present, as were a goodly number of young American and English women. Even in the light of my high expectations, I was pleasantly surprised to find here, on a remote island inhabited by an almost completely uncivilized people, a society that could compete with the salons of our great European cities—the women in dress, manners, and taste; the men in dignity, conversation, and wealth. Charmed by this brilliant gathering, by an excellent dinner, and by the ball at which the young men of Honolulu held their own with the young officers of *L'Artémise* in competing for dancing partners, I could easily have believed the capital city of the Sandwich Islands to be Sailors' Paradise. . . . The fact of the matter is that the few white families constituting this high society are not necessarily on good terms; and though by rights they all should get along well, they give way to rivalries of fortune, business, and nationality far too often for the peace and happiness of the community. Everyone complains about contention, but no one dares step in to put an end to it.

Blame for this state of affairs is laid, rightly or wrongly, at the feet

of the missionaries and their followers, for it is said that they are bigoted, intolerant, and often lacking in charity toward their neighbor. Moreover, it is alleged that they sow political and religious discord among these families in order to satisfy their own self-interest and desires, just as they do among the rest of the population in order to dominate it more easily.

These perpetual quarrels hamper the work of civilizing the natives, in part because they limit contact between white ladies and the wives of the chiefs to infrequent, formal social calls. As a result, upper-class native women remain much as they always have been, even though they have before their eyes models for the roles of mother and homemaker. Native women may well put on the latest fashions from London and New York for special events; they may indeed marry in accordance with Christian law; they may even attend church services more than once a day; but there ends what they have learned of practical and spiritual matters from the Methodists. Within their own homes they eagerly resume old customs and spend most of their time idly reclining on mats in disdain of the domestic virtues that Europeans value so highly. It might well be said that the main virtue of these women consists in concealing their infidelities from the missionaries while making the whites who, at the risk of fortune and reputation, become entangled with them pay as dearly as possible. . . .

The arrival of *L'Artémise* at the Sandwich Islands has opened a new era for these people, commented one of my fellow dinner guests, who I discovered was not only a rich merchant but also a quiet, educated man of good judgment. ["No one doubts that the salutary shock you have given the native government will show it where its true interests lie and make it determined to cast off once and for all the political yoke of the Methodist missionaries. . . . In a short time the archipelago will achieve a high degree of prosperity, especially if the great maritime powers of the world (including the masters of Kamchatka [i.e., Russia]) can agree that it is in their mutual interest to take the Sandwich Islands under their protection, thereby guaranteeing them absolute independence and complete neutrality in the foreseeable clashes of interest between Russia, Great Britain, and the United States in these far-flung regions of the globe."]

France did not figure in his list of nations having a stake in the

future of the Pacific. And I could scarcely protest, for it is true that she has no possessions in the Great Ocean and her ships go there but rarely, although French products are not unknown in those regions. Our wines, brandies, fabrics, and luxury goods find ready purchasers in Honolulu as well as in Russian, British, and Mexican settlements; but these articles are imported by American merchants (or replaced by substitutes of American manufacture). French wines and brandies are subject to excessively high duties, on the grounds that bringing them into the Sandwich Islands would be harmful to the morals of the native population. American rum, on the other hand, is brought in—whether legally or illegally, I do not know—and consumed in prodigious quantities.

It was my task to end this prohibition so detrimental to our commercial interests. I succeeded in doing so through a convention with the king of the Islands where he agreed that in the future French wines and brandies would be subject to no more than a 6 percent ad valorem duty when imported under the French flag.⁴¹ The American missionaries raged and fumed at me, claiming that I was anti-Christian. They brought down on me all the curses of New and Old World Bible societies, to whom they depicted me as championing drunkenness among their converts—as if the way in which they were running things allowed these poor people to earn enough to buy Champagne, Bordeaux, or even Cognac brandy.⁴² Despite these diatribes, as unjust as they were treacherous, I carried my project to completion. The proof that I acted expediently lies in subsequent events. In addition, to protect my work from the ill-will of these dangerous enemies, I obtained from the king the concession that in the future any of my countrymen accused of a misdemeanor or even of a crime should be tried before a jury composed solely of foreign residents and not by so-called judges recruited from the native population who were likely to be under the thumb of the American missionaries and therefore instruments of their spite.

I had hoped, too, to make strides toward emancipating this unfortunate people in private conversation with the young king during his visit to *L'Artémise*. Stormy, rainy weather kept him from coming the following day as he had intended to do, but the day after—the 17th of July—he, his secretary (my former hostage), and several others

from his court came to join me for luncheon on board. The ceremony with which we welcomed him appeared to delight him greatly; we soon were on the best of terms; trust and confidence reigned between us. I discovered in him a keen desire to learn, especially about the fitting-out of warships; his numerous questions showed intelligence and a fair knowledge of the mariner's profession (for which it was said he showed considerable aptitude). He bore himself with dignity, wore his smart English uniform with ease, and seemed not in the least embarrassed to have to face me. I judged him to be benevolent and kind, though not without that slyness and inherent mistrust that seem to characterize uncivilized peoples. Yet it was he who broached the topic of the treaty and trade agreement he had just signed when we found ourselves alone during our after luncheon promenade on deck. He gave no evidence of being upset by what had transpired; he acknowledged that France's grievances against his government were valid; he even agreed with my point of view in this matter, particularly when I reassured him that the 100,000 francs deposit would be returned to him as soon as all parts of the treaty had been faithfully and loyally executed.

I found him of equal good will when I called his attention to how urgently he needed to change the way his country was being run if he wanted to put an end to the suffering of his people. He confessed, to his regret, that by himself he did not have the strength to withstand the missionaries: they had won over the high chiefs and his nearest relatives, thus putting it completely beyond his power to make even the smallest change in the established order.

["]Why don't you stay here in Honolulu for a while?["] he asked; ["]you could give me guidance and support. With such help I could soon begin to better my country, and save my people from the extreme poverty into which I see them sinking with such disastrous speed. But no, just like the commanders of French warships who have come before, you will soon leave, never to return, after having made me aware of how distressing and humiliating my position is. You have made my task even more difficult by imposing new demands on me, without leaving me the resources to successfully block the attempts to keep me from fulfilling them that surely will be made once your frigate has left our harbor.["]⁴³

I must confess that the naïve laments of this young ruler of a primitive people so touched me that I was almost tempted to give in to his wishes. . . . I would have liked to have had a part in wresting the Sandwich Islands from the control of the Methodist missionaries and in making sure that their natives received the political and religious freedom that I consider absolutely necessary to their well-being. . . .

The king never tired of asking about the various objects that attracted his attention on board ship. He wanted to see everything, to inspect everything, so that it was long after two o'clock that he returned to shore in my dinghy, to the salute of our guns and the cheers of the crew of *L'Artémise*.

This ceremony was the last of my official acts in the Sandwich Islands; I was eager to continue my journey [because summer was drawing to a close, and autumn storms were soon to come. So, two days later], on the morning of July 20th, we set sail for the Russian settlements on the northwest coast of America.

REPERCUSSIONS

The timely departure of another ship permitted Laplace to report to the minister of the navy on July 17, 1839, that his diplomatic mission to Hawai'i had been accomplished:

In my last dispatch I had the honor of recounting to Your Excellency the favorable outcome of my negotiations with Queen Pomaré; I have been no less successful in the Sandwich Islands, as the enclosed treaties will show, even though I have found the government of this archipelago far less inclined than the chiefs of Tahiti to consider all my demands. But the government was so completely intimidated by my threat to begin hostilities at once and by the sight of three hundred men organized in troops prepared to land for an attack on the fort and the city, that the treaty I presented was signed and the 20,000 dollars required to guarantee its execution were deposited on board *L'Artémise*.

The enclosed documents will suffice to inform Your Excellency of the means I used to achieve my goal without using force. The manifesto seemed necessary to me not only to announce my intentions and to garner the support of the many Europeans living in Honolulu (which I did with complete success), but also to make use of the *Sandwich Island Gazette* to make known in this part of the globe the reasons behind our government's decision to act as well as the purpose of that

action.⁴⁴ I did this in order to avoid, insofar as possible, reawakening the cries of recrimination that have resounded in the South Pacific, especially at Sidney, as a result of *La Vénus's* expedition to Tahiti.⁴⁵ If I had not done so, the English and the Americans would not have refrained from asserting—in order to discredit the French name—that the 20,000 dollars were a ransom and not a deposit.

I would have liked to guarantee the execution of the treaty by another means, but I know of none more preferable strategically or from the point of view of prudence. Only the threat of losing so large a sum will keep the king of the Sandwich Islands from repeating the mistakes that come from giving in to the perfidious suggestions of the Methodist missionaries. . . .⁴⁶

Believing he had done what was right, necessary, and sufficient, Laplace set sail from Honolulu on July 20, 1839. The American Protestant missionaries, however, were incensed—and vociferously so—at the French captain's behavior. They complained that his offer of protection to the British and American consuls and the citizens of their respective countries specifically excluded members of the American Protestant clergy; they protested that the Hawaiian king was forced to sign treaties at gunpoint, and they rebelled against the admission of French wines and brandies into the Islands.⁴⁷ Moreover, they were offended by "the arbitrary and tyrannical conduct of this commanding officer."⁴⁸ They presented their grievances to their government in the form of a memorial to Congress.⁴⁹ They also attempted to have the French government annul the treaties.⁵⁰

The French government, on the other hand, approved the substance and style of Laplace's diplomacy. The Ministry of Foreign affairs listened to the complaints and pleas of the American Protestant missionaries; it examined and re-examined Laplace's treaties of July 12 and July 17, 1839, and then made the following statement:

It is against this convention and this treaty that the representatives of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions vigorously protest in a petition addressed to the king, and that a certain Mr. Baird attacks no less forcefully in a letter addressed to the minister denouncing the conduct of the commander of the *Artemise* as unjust and tyrannical. . . .⁵¹

This allegation is contradicted by the facts themselves and by public knowledge.

In the final analysis, the actions of Mr. Laplace are not deserving of the blame with which [the above-mentioned documents cover them]; they have received the commendation of the foreign residents of Honolulu, and have made the best of impressions in France. *The only people whom they have offended have been the Methodists.*⁵²

With this statement, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs laid to rest, as far as the French were concerned, any and all dispute over the "Laplace Affair."

Laplace himself must have found the staunch support of the French government gratifying. When he brought *L'Artémise* home to Lorient in April 1840, after having put into port in California, Peru, and Brazil in the wake of his visit to Honolulu, he received congratulations from the minister of the navy for having "worthily and completely fulfilled the important mission with which you have been entrusted."⁵³ Congratulations took the material form of promotion to rear-admiral on July 12, 1840.

For the next several years, Laplace divided his time between his family (he had married Albertine Eléonore Bouchon, a young widow, on July 14, 1840), writing the narrative of his second voyage, and occupying positions of responsibility in naval administration both at home and abroad.⁵⁴ In June 1853 he was named one of France's ten vice-admirals. He continued to serve in naval administrative posts of the highest order⁵⁵ until he retired into the Naval Reserve Squadron on November 7, 1858. When Laplace died at home in Brest on January 24, 1875, he had served in the French Navy for more than sixty-five of his eighty-one years. The name Laplace, in his eyes (as he believed it to be in the eyes of the French government) was associated not with a single diplomatic controversy, but with "a brave and loyal officer whose military career had been completely, and not without distinction, devoted to the honor of the Navy and the grandeur of France in far-off countries."⁵⁶

NOTES

¹ All material that appears as quotation from French sources is my own translation except where specifically attributed to another translator. Many people and institutions have generously assisted me in my translating and editing; special thanks go to Smith College for time and money, to Mona Younès for

research assistance, to Françoise Favre for an astute critical reading of my translations, and to Peter H. Searl for invaluable advice at every step of the way. I have consulted a number of archives and libraries to which I refer by the following abbreviations: AH: Archives of Hawai'i (Honolulu); ANM: Archives de la Marine aux Archives Nationales (Paris); BN: Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris); BPBM: Bernice P. Bishop Museum (Honolulu); HMCS: Hawaiian Mission Children's Society (Honolulu); MAE: Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (Paris); SHM: Service Historique de la Marine (Paris).

² A full English translation of this treaty was published in *SIG* July 27, 1839.

³ The English text of the convention of July 17, 1839, has been published in Hiram Bingham, *A Residence of Twenty-one Years in the Sandwich Islands* (1847; rpt. Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1981) 547-48.

⁴ *Mercantile Journal* (Boston), 14 February 1840.

⁵ Levi Chamberlain, *Journal*, 23, Tuesday, July 9, 1839. HMCS.

⁶ R. C. Wyllie to British Consul at Canton, February 6, 1852, F.O. & Ex, AH. Similar expressions of indignation occur in Dr. Anderson, "Visit of the French Frigate l'Artemise at the Sandwich Islands," *Proceedings of the Thirty-first Annual Meeting of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Providence, RI, Sept. 9-11, 1840* 32-35; Bingham, *A Residence* 536-58; S. N. Castle, "An Account of the Transactions connected with the visit of the *l'Artemise*;—Remarks on the Manifesto;—and the Treatment of the Missionaries," *Hawaiian Spectator* 2 (Oct. 1839): 447-94; Samuel Hubbard, Rufus Anderson, David Greene, and Wm. J. Armstrong, "Letter to His Majesty The King of the French, July 1840," *Correspondance Politique—Océanie*, I bis, MAE; J. J. Jarves, "Account of the visit of the French frigate *L'Artemise*," *Hawaiian Spectator* 2 (July 1839): 32-63. Also "Premiers actes des Français à Oahu, en 1839," French translation of Article 5, *Nonanona E* (Sept. 14, 1841), *Correspondance Commerciale—Honolulu—1837-1852*, MAE (article and translation sent to the French minister of foreign affairs in Paris by France's consular representative in Honolulu, Jules Dudoit).

⁷ Most notably Robert Aldrich, *The French Presence in the South Pacific, 1842-1940* (London: Macmillan, 1990); George Verne Blue, "The Policy of France toward the Hawaiian Islands from the Earliest Times to the Treaty of 1846," in Albert Pierce Taylor, ed., *The Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: Captain Cook Sesquicentennial Commission, 1930) 51-93 and "The Project for a French Settlement in the Hawaiian Islands, 1824-1842," *Pacific Historical Review* 2 (March 1933): 85-99; Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1968) 102-03; John Dunmore, *French Explorers in the Pacific*, vol. 2: *The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Ralph S. Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom*, vol. 1, 1778-1854: *Foundation and Transformation* (Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1948) 137-69, Reginald Yzendoorn, *History of the Catholic Mission in the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: Honolulu Star-Bulletin, 1927). See also the following French sources: Jean Chesneaux and Nic Maclellan, *La France dans le Pacifique: De Bougainville à*

- Moruroa* (Paris: La Découverte, 1992); Jean Paul Faivre, *L'Expansion française dans le Pacifique de 1800 à 1842* (Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1953); Léonce Jore, *L'Océan Pacifique au temps de la Restauration et de la Monarchie de Juillet (1815-1848)*, 2 vols. (Paris: Besson et Chantemerle, 1959).
- ⁸ Cyrille-Pierre-Théodore Laplace, *Campagne de circumnavigation de la frégate L'Artémise, pendant les années 1837, 1838, 1839, et 1840*, 6 vols. (Paris: A. Bertrand, 1841-1854), 5: 417-97, 531-42.
- ⁹ For details, see Jore, *L'Océan Pacifique* 2: 9-11, 28-35.
- ¹⁰ *Mémoires et documents—Océanie—(1836-1883): Iles Sandwich*, MAE.
- ¹¹ Vaillant to Minister of Navy, Honolulu, Oct. 22, 1836, BB 4 1007, ANM.
- ¹² Bachelot to Dupetit-Thouars, Honolulu, July 12, 1837, BB 4 1005, ANM.
- ¹³ Convention of July 24, 1837, BB 4 1005, ANM.
- ¹⁴ Jore, *L'Océan Pacifique* 2: 33; Yzendoorn, *History of the Catholic Mission* 110.
- ¹⁵ Emphasis added. *Mémoires et Documents—Océanie*, April 1838, MAE.
- ¹⁶ *Mémoires et Documents—Océanie*, MAE.
- ¹⁷ Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom* 150-51.
- ¹⁸ Yzendoorn, *History of the Catholic Mission* 124-31.
- ¹⁹ Blue, "The Policy" 69.
- ²⁰ SIG June 22, 1839, quoted in Yzendoorn, *History of the Catholic Mission* 130.
- ²¹ Dudoit to Minister of the Navy, Nov. 21, 1837, BB 4 1008, ANM.
- ²² On July 21, 1838, the minister of the navy forwarded to Laplace copies of these letters written to Villeneuve by the two consuls, N.A.F. 9447, BN.
- ²³ "Inasmuch as the Catholic religion is that of the majority of Frenchmen, the hatred of that religion that the American Calvinist ministers have inspired in the hearts of some of the principal chiefs (who call that religion *Pelani*, which is to say French) has extended to all members of the French nation." Dudoit to Minister of Navy, Nov. 21, 1837, BB 4 1008, ANM.
- ²⁴ *Correspondance Politique—Océanie*, vol. 1 bis, MAE.
- ²⁵ Laplace to Minister of Navy, June 21, 1839, BB 4 1008, ANM.
- ²⁶ BB 4 1008, ANM.
- ²⁷ Emphasis added. The full text of the "Manifesto," in English translation, can be found Bingham, *A Residence* 536-38 and in Yzendoorn, *History of the Catholic Mission* 134-35. Extensive selections from it appear in Kuykendall, *The Hawaiian Kingdom* 165-66.
- ²⁸ Abel Dupetit-Thouars, *Voyage autour du monde sur la frégate la Vénus, pendant les années 1836-1839* (Paris: Gide, 1841), 2: 383-92.
- ²⁹ CC 7: Laplace, Cyrille-Pierre-Théodore, SHM. See also Etienne Taillemite, *Dictionnaire des Marins Français* (Editions Maritimes et D'Outre-mer, 1982) 196-97.
- ³⁰ Laplace to the Minister of the Navy, Apr. 20, 1829, Laplace, SHM.
- ³¹ Laplace, *Voyage autour du monde par les Mers de l'Inde et de la Chine exécuté sur la corvette la Favorite, pendant les années 1830, 1831 et 1832*. 5 vols. (Paris, 1833-1835).

³² Consul General of the King at New York to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris, July 8, 1836, Laplace, SHM.

³³ "Instructions addressed by the Minister of the Navy to Monsieur Laplace," in Laplace, *Campagne* 1 (1841): ix-vi.

³⁴ Laplace, *Campagne* 1: v.

³⁵ I have been inspired in this approach to translating Laplace by Helen Rosenman's translation of Captain Jules S.-C. Dumont D'Urville, *Two Voyages to the South Seas* (Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1992); I am indebted also, for more than one well-turned phrase, to an unpublished partial translation of Laplace made by Victor S. K. Houston, BPBM.

³⁶ Laplace's footnote:

Here is the Manifesto. Its text may reflect the circumstances in which I found myself. I had but little time for negotiation, because the success of my over-all mission might have already been compromised by the extended stay we had made in Tahiti when the frigate ran aground there. On the other hand, by acting thus with force and speed, I gave my adversaries no time to collect their thoughts or to have recourse to foreign intervention which, whether by chance or by plan, could have hindered me in my expedition. My means proved successful, for, without firing a single shot, without harming a soul, I obtained from the king of the Sandwich Islands all the concessions, all the guarantees that I had sought in the interest of our foreign policy and trade. . . .

This introductory paragraph is followed by the text of the "Manifesto" and the Treaty of July 12, 1839.

³⁷ Chamberlain, *Journal*, Wednesday, July 10, 1839, HMCS.

³⁸ Chamberlain, *Journal*, Wednesday, July 10, 1839, HMCS. John Ii to Kekuanaoa, Governor of O'ahu, July 12, 1839, on board the warship: "I regret very much that I cannot speak the English language well, otherwise I would discuss with him about our side of the question." Translation by an unknown translator, F.O. & Ex. 1839 July 12, AH.

³⁹ For the English text of Laplace's communication to the Subcommittee of vigilance (Jno. Meek, Geo. Pelly, John C. Jones, C. Brewer, W. Hooper, and Wm. Francis), see Bingham, *A Residence* 545.

⁴⁰ Although Laplace refers to the American Protestant missionaries as "Methodists," they were, in fact, more Calvinist than Methodist.

⁴¹ Laplace's footnote:

In fact, the trade agreement and treaty signed by the king of the Sandwich Islands were the inevitable outcome of the act of resistance that I had just made in that archipelago.

This treaty, it is true, made the Catholics, or, rather, the French, safe from further persecution; but my job would have been only half done and probably in vain, had I not done my best to protect the rights of our merchants and compatriots established in these faraway lands from the ill-will of the American missionaries. It was clear that the latter expected to serve the political and

commercial interests of their country by barring the French from the archipelago, under the pretext that as Papists the French were corrupting their converts to Protestantism.

Navy officers, in general, are not very well-versed in the language of diplomacy; at least I was not, at that time. Consequently, I found myself in a rather difficult situation when I was obliged to draw up, rather quickly, first a peace treaty and then a commercial agreement dealing tactfully yet firmly with so many divergent interests.

My readers will be the judges of whether or not I met this challenge successfully; I would, however, say on my own behalf, that the government sanctioned my work and that events have justified my actions.

It is thus without apprehension that I transcribe the trade agreement here, in the belief that if it has been executed with prudence, intelligence, and steadiness of purpose, *L'Artémise's* passage through the Sandwich Islands will not have been without advantage for my country. . . . [Laplace then gives the text of the convention of July 17, 1839.]

⁴² Laplace's footnote:

In 1842, the honorable head of foreign missions in Paris, for the order that produced and still produces a growing number of courageous apostles of the Christian religion, presented me his thanks for the services I had rendered the Catholic faith in Polynesia and informed me of our priests' success in the Sandwich Islands. At the very moment that such heart-warming recognition for my efforts on behalf of this worthy cause came to me, one of our most distinguished prelates sent me several passages from an article written by an American Methodist missionary published in the third installment of the *Journal of Evangelical Missions* of 1842 bearing the title: *Effects of the simultaneous introduction of Catholic missionaries and French brandies to the Sandwich Islands*. This is what they said:

"We believe that we have a duty to fulfill in pointing out the consequences of the behavior of a French seaman toward the Sandwich Islands. It is painful but necessary to do so. Christian Frenchmen, not friends of the Gospel alone but friends of the Gospel *and* of the true honor of their country, can broach this humiliating subject only with a flush of shame. Listen to the complaints of two of our brothers in the Sandwich Islands. Since the triumph of the French over the government of this country, so they write, the moral character of the Islands has changed. *Romanism* has made and continues to make considerable progress among us. Its priests flock to us from France and prepare against us, in the midst of the native population, a formidable fellowship; they seek to seduce this simple people by the most artful means.

"It is at Honolulu, capital of the Islands and theater of Captain Laplace's exploit that the first effects of the double introduction of Catholics and French brandies have been felt. Protests against the *intemperance* and imprudent conduct of Captain Laplace have been made, and the contrast between American and French seamen is so great that the natives, even half-civilized as

they are, have not been able to keep from seeing the difference. The former come here to do good from a *political* as well as a moral standpoint, the latter to *ruin the natives and turn them into slaves*. The former have enriched the government and other foreigners by 62,000 dollars, the latter have *stolen 20,000 dollars from the government and imposed upon the nation the scourge of drunkenness*. The most efficient auxiliaries of the Catholic priests are spirituous beverages in all their forms, brandies, rums, wines, etc.: *that is the spirit which has accompanied them to these islands, that is the spirit which allows them to convert souls.*"

These excerpts from reports made by the Methodist missionaries established in the Sandwich Islands to their co-religionists in Europe demonstrate better than could I first, the nature of the enemies against whom I had to defend, all at once, the religious, political, and commercial interests of my country; and second, whether my judgment has been impartial toward these men who only a few years later made manifest the hostility that motivated their dealings with French authority in Tahiti as well as in the Sandwich Islands.

They have been unjust and prejudicial toward me as I have not been toward them. With no bitterness in my soul have I judged their conduct in Polynesia. Admittedly, I have criticized their intolerance; I have said that the ways in which they, in their zeal, chose to fulfill their admirable mission to propagate the Gospel did not seem to me to be the direct path to the noble, high-minded goals that the honorable members of the Reformed Church had in mind in sending them to those far-off lands and in maintaining them at great expense there. On the other hand, whenever I have had occasion to do so, I have paid tribute to the good that they have done, to the dignity of their behavior and to the propriety of their conduct. Which is true: that, as I maintain (even though I understand why they acted as they did), they were wrong in the means they chose to reach their end, or that I myself was wrong? Let the reader be the judge. Yet I hope that whatever his decision he will find nothing to offend religious sensibility in what I have written and no failure on my part to honor the principle that has been my inviolable law as writer and observer: that of invariable impartiality in judging things, of profound respect for all that is venerable, finally and especially, of absolute abstention from any kind of personal accusation.

⁴³ Laplace's footnote:

The poor young prince was not mistaken in his predictions, for no sooner had the frigate set sail than our rivals tried their utmost to get around the treaty that I had compelled the government of the Sandwich Islands to conclude with me; and doubtless this treaty would have had the same fate as those concluded by the captains of *La Bonite* and *La Vénus*, had I not taken the precaution of securing 20,000 Spanish gold dollars as a guarantee that it would be executed. Likewise, without this guarantee, our missionaries certainly could not have made Catholicism flourish as they have on Wahoo and on most of the other islands of the archipelago, to the extent where today, it is safe to say,

that because they are so numerous, our co-religionists are protected from persecutions like the one they were suffering when *L'Artémise* arrived in Honolulu harbor.

But, as one can well imagine, our priests have not achieved this success without arousing the jealousy and animosity of their antagonists, who would surely try to eliminate their competition once again by violent means, were they not restrained by fear of losing the deposit in question (of which, so it would seem, they themselves had contributed the greater part).

This state of affairs lasted as long as our government paid heed to my warnings and did not return the 20,000 Spanish dollars which I had deposited with the commander of the French Naval Station in the Pacific when I returned to France. But unfortunately, in 1846 or 1847, he [Rear Admiral Hamelin] returned them to the king of the Sandwich Islands upon instruction from Paris. No sooner had this deed of excessive generosity been done (more out of chivalry than sound political principle), than relations again became strained between our two countries. It is true that Catholics were not despoiled of their property, nor made to do compulsory labor, nor forcibly isolated from their spiritual leaders; this was no longer possible. But they were made to suffer many minor harassments which undermined the freedom of conscience that I had obtained for them. Duties on French wines and brandies, which had been set by the trade convention, were greatly increased, for specious reasons; native authorities no longer offered protection to French merchants as they had in the past; finally, things came to such a pass that a few years ago, after repeated petitions, complaints, and threats, the commander of the French Naval Station [Rear Admiral Legoarant de Tromelin] was obliged to go in person to the Sandwich Islands to seek reparations for a multitude of violations of these treaties. When the government of Wahoo refused to give reparation (perhaps because it hoped that a major power would intercede on its behalf), the fort of Honolulu was demolished, its munitions taken or destroyed. Then, since the French admiral could find no authority with whom to negotiate, he left, without having been able to secure from the king of the Sandwich Islands any guarantee that we would be better treated in the future.

Now that the extraordinary events of the last two years have changed California completely, the importance of the Sandwich Islands has grown both commercially and militarily, and the influence of the United States is greater than ever there. But the position that I allowed Catholics to take up there will provide a firm base of support for France should she decide one day to develop serious political and commercial interests in the regions that lie beyond Cape Horn and south of the equator.

⁴⁴ Dupetit-Thouars had sent his ultimatum to the queen alone; Laplace made his ultimatum to the king a public document.

⁴⁵ Dupetit-Thouars to Minister of the Navy, Sydney, Nov. 30, 1838, BB 4 1005, ANM.

- ⁴⁶ BB 4 1008, ANM. Dupetit-Thouars had demanded 2,000 piastres or Spanish (gold) dollars as an indemnity (Dupetit-Thouars 438); Laplace demanded 20,000 piastres. The entire revenue of the Hawaiian Islands amounted to only 14,000 piastres when Vaillant visited in 1836. (Vaillant to Minister of the Navy, "Rapport sur les Iles Sandwich à la fin de 1836" BB 4 1007, ANM).
- ⁴⁷ For a general analysis of the grievances held by the American Protestant missionaries, see Jore, *L'Océan Pacifique* 43–46; for specifics, see *Correspondance Politique—Océanie*, vol. 1 bis, MAE; Hunnewell; Jarves; Wyllie.
- ⁴⁸ ABCFM to King Louis-Philippe, *Correspondance Politique—Océanie*, vol. 1 bis, MAE.
- ⁴⁹ Yzendoorn, *History of the Catholic Mission* 139. The matter was later referred to the Department of State, which took no action on the subject.
- ⁵⁰ Yzendoorn, *History of the Catholic Mission* 139–40, describes the efforts of Mr. Baird; *Correspondance Commerciale—Honolulu 1837–1852*, MAE, refers to the diplomatic mission of Timothy Haalilio and William Richards to Paris in 1842, which also sought to have these treaties annulled. The ABCFM letter to King Louis-Philippe was also directed toward obtaining his disavowal of the treaties.
- ⁵¹ *Correspondance Politique—Océanie—Iles Sandwich*, vol. 1 bis, MAE.
- ⁵² Emphasis added. *Mémoires et documents—Océanie*, "Note 6, May 1841," MAE. What happened to French Catholics in Hawai'i in the years after *L'Artémise* departed, considered independently from the French government's assessment, is amply set forth in Yzendoorn, *History of the Catholic Mission*.
- ⁵³ Minister of Navy to Laplace, Paris, Apr. 22, 1840, BB 4 1008, ANM.
- ⁵⁴ Commander of the Naval Station of the Antilles (1844–1847), Laplace, SHM.
- ⁵⁵ Member of the seven-member Admiralty Council (1854), maritime prefect of Brest (1855–1858), Laplace, SHM.
- ⁵⁶ Laplace to Minister of Navy, July 11, 1848, Laplace, SHM.

